



## In Our Words Newsletter

### Student Writing

#### The First Chapter of My Life in the States by Saori Hildebrand, English Language Learner

In 2019, I moved to Nashville from Japan to follow my husband who just started going to Vanderbilt law school in the summer. I was genuinely happy and supportive of his decision, but on the other hand, I wasn't sure if I really could live comfortably in this country with my limited English abilities. In order to wipe away those worries, I started taking some English classes at Vanderbilt in 2020. But then all of a sudden, the pandemic happened. All my classes became online, and I started feeling the need to have some different opportunities to learn English, hopefully one on one. At that time, my friends told me that they were having English sessions with their tutors introduced by NALC.

I immediately contacted them, and Crystal introduced me to Al as my tutor. He is the perfect tutor for me. He knows a lot about Japanese people and Japanese culture through his career. He also understands why I make such mistakes because he knows some words and grammar in Japanese. Those facts and his passion to teach helped me improve my English quickly. At our sessions, and sometimes even outside of the sessions, including our spouses, we always had a great time. Whenever I talk to him, I always feel that we are more family members or friends than just a teacher and a student.

After I started having sessions with him, I also had a lot of adventures in my life here. My husband and I had taken a road trip to the West to see all the National parks such as Grand Canyon and Zion for 3 weeks, temporarily lived in Atlanta and New York City for 3 months and took a cruise to the Caribbean with our family. Other than that, how lucky I am, I have visited more than 20 states since I moved here. One of the other things is that I started doing volunteer work at the Frist Museum. Once every 2 weeks, I communicated with the visitors and helped them make their own art projects. I also got a part-time job at Starbucks. I was able to enjoy all those adventures and challenges I had even more, because I improved my English communication skills since I started having sessions with Al through the NALC program.

Thus, I genuinely express my gratitude to Al, Crystal, and NALC for providing me such an amazing opportunity to improve my skills and grow more confident of myself. My husband and I are moving out of Nashville soon, and having our new life in New York City. Now, when I ask myself if I have the ability to live in this country, and if I can find some great opportunities by using my skills when I get to New York, the answer is YES. Because I know that whenever I need some encouragement, the words Al always gave me, "your English is amazing, you can do it, don't be nervous and you are already wonderful", will remind me that I am going to be OK.

### NALC

#### Announcements

Find news from staff and other updates here!

#### Crystal Gimesh, New Literacy Specialist

NALC's beloved Sarah Coode has retired, and cherished staff member, Crystal Gimesh, has moved into the role of Literacy Specialist. If you are a Literacy Learner, Crystal will be your new contact.

You can get in touch with Crystal at [cgimesh@nashvilleliteracy.org](mailto:cgimesh@nashvilleliteracy.org) or (615) 298 - 8060.



#### Submit Your Work

Do you have something to share? Please let your teacher or a NALC worker know OR submit work using the button below. You can also email your work to [mharding@nashvilleliteracy.org](mailto:mharding@nashvilleliteracy.org). We are here to help!

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